


Texas Department of Health

The Commissioner's Report to the Board of Health

July 25, 2002

TDH Hot Topics



West Nile Virus.

The TDH Laboratory is currently in the process of confirming the first reported human case of West Nile Virus in a 50-year-old man from Orange County. TDH has been emphasizing, both to the media and to the public, that this disease has low morbidity and low mortality and that there are simple precautions to take to help prevent the disease.

West Nile Virus made its way into Texas this summer. The virus was first detected in the United States in New York in 1999. In Texas, the first two birds with the virus were collected in Northwest Harris County on June 10. As of July 12, the virus has been found in Harris and surrounding counties and Dallas County. It is anticipated that most of the eastern third of the state will become “home” to the virus. *For more information, contact Jim Schuermann, Zoonosis Control Division, at (512) 458-7255 or e-mail jim.schuermann@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Texas Wins Major Medicaid Case.

The 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled late Wednesday, July 24, that Texas is providing adequate health care for children enrolled in Texas Health Steps, a Medicaid program administered by TDH. The court threw out an earlier (August 2000) order by a U.S. District Court Judge. The case was argued by the Texas Attorney General’s Office. AG John Cornyn said of the successful appeal: “This ruling appropriately recognizes the state’s diligent and successful efforts to meet the medical needs of our children.” About 1.5 million Texas children are enrolled in Medicaid.



TDH Responds to Widespread Flooding

TDH-Austin, TDH-Region 8, and local health department staff worked closely to secure public health concerns in the Texas counties overwhelmed this month by floodwaters. Seventeen of 28 counties in Region 8 have been declared a federal disaster area. Statewide, 44 counties were heavily flooded. Five counties in Region 2/3, five counties in Region 7, and six counties in Region 11 were also declared; their regional staff provided technical assistance, advice, and vector-control guidance to affected community leaders.

Region 8 activities included the following: A disease and flood-related condition surveillance was put in place and remains active in those communities where water systems, wastewater plants, or other infrastructure damage increased the possibility of food-borne or water-borne disease. Staff manned the State and District Emergency Operations Center and facilitated meetings to coordinate the flow of information. Other activities included: arranging EMS support of nursing home evacuations, shelter assessment and support, restaurant and retail food inspections, human and zoonotic disease surveillance, vector-control consultations, mosquito trapping, numerous news

releases and health alerts, and, of course, immunizations. Local Health Departments and our TDH local public health centers provided more than 5,000 tetanus boosters to first responders, recovery workers, and victims of the flooding. The Division of Emergency Preparedness, Infectious Disease Epi and Surveillance, Office of Communications, Public Health Laboratory, Zoonosis Control, and State Entomologist were all recognized by the Region and Local Health Departments as providing outstanding support of their local efforts during this disaster. *For more information, contact Sandra Morris, Tuberculosis Control Division, at (210) 949-2196 or e-mail sandra.morris@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Asbestos Programs Prepare for Increased Licensing Requests

Recent heavy rains and flooding have resulted in damage to buildings that may contain asbestos. As repairs begin, the TDH Asbestos Programs Branch, part of the Toxic Substances Control Division, is preparing to accommodate the need for increased asbestos-abatement activity in affected areas. By taking action early, TDH hopes to avoid unnecessary delays in making needed repairs to public and commercial buildings while maintaining asbestos health and safety standards. *For more information, contact John Onyenobi, Enforcement Administrator, TDH Asbestos Programs Branch, at (512) 834-6600, ext. 2453, or (800) 572-5548 or e-mail john.onyenobi@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Pertussis in Burnet County.

Pertussis continues to be a problem in Region 7, especially in Burnet County. There have been 125 cases since May in Burnet County. About 476 possible cases in Burnet County are under investigation, including several at three summer camps in the area. Staff from Region 7 and Marble Falls have sent alerts to physicians, emergency rooms, and child-care centers in Burnet, Blanco, and Llano counties.

One of the 125 cases was a 7-week-old baby who was airlifted to Brackenridge Hospital in Austin due to an episode of apnea. This infant, now recovering, had four physician and emergency-room visits without being diagnosed and treated for pertussis prior to the parent's calling EMS for assistance.

In response to the ongoing pertussis outbreak in Region 7, the Texas Public Health Association in conjunction with TDH presented a workshop titled "Controlling Pertussis in 2002" at the Austin Hyatt Regency on June 22, and about 50 public and private health professionals from Region 7 attended. The event was aided by educational grants provided by Aventis Pasteur and GlaxoSmithKline Pharmaceuticals. *For more information, contact Laura Tabony or David Bastis, Immunization Division, Surveillance and Epidemiology Program, at (512) 458-7284 or e-mail laura.tabony@tdh.state.tx.us; or contact Maribeth Bartz, Region 7, at (254) 778-6744 or e-mail maribeth.bartz@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Bordatella Pertussis Testing.

Since early May, the Clinical Bacteriology Section (CBS) of the TDH Bureau of Laboratories has examined 609 pertussis specimens (295 cultures and 314 slides). Of these 609 specimens, 29 (13 slides and 16 cultures) have been found positive. In just one week's time, CBS received 71 pertussis cultures and 49 pertussis slides for testing in association with the Marble Falls outbreak; the section is receiving an average of 20 swabs a day for pertussis testing. Immunization had a conference call on June 27 with CDC to receive guidance for efficient testing of patients. *For more information, contact Susan Neill, Bureau of Laboratories, at (512) 458-7318 or e-mail susan.neill@tdh.state.tx.us.*



West Nile Virus and Mosquito Control.

The General Sanitation Division provides assistance related to the West Nile virus and mosquito control. After isolation of the West Nile virus in Harris County, the TDH State Entomologist with the General Sanitation Division began working with staff of the Harris County Mosquito Control District concerning mosquito-control measures to institute in the affected areas of Harris County including ground and aerial pesticide applications.

For more information, contact Roy G. Burton, TDH, General Sanitation Division, Vector Control Branch, at (512) 834-6635, ext. 2302, or e-mail roy.burton@tdh.state.tx.us.



Mosquitoes.

Through June, Medical Entomology identified 57,600+ mosquitoes. This number is expected to quadruple because West Nile virus has been found in the state and because of the recent flood-causing rains. *For more information, contact Susan Neill, Bureau of Laboratories, at (512) 458-7318 or e-mail susan.neill@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Zoonosis Control Program.

The Region 6/5 South Zoonosis Control Program has enhanced the mosquito surveillance and dead-bird surveillance for West Nile virus and other arboviruses in the region. As of July 10, the surveillance has revealed more than 46 dead birds and one horse confirmed for the West Nile virus in Harris and Montgomery counties. In addition, there are seven pools of mosquitoes that have tested positive for the virus in Harris and Fort Bend counties. Zoonosis Control is working with local mosquito-control and animal-control agencies to assist in conducting the mosquito surveillance and dead-bird surveillance throughout the 16-county jurisdiction. *For more information, contact Dana Beckham, Zoonosis Control Veterinarian, at (713) 767-3300 or e-mail dana.beckham@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Pesticide Applicator Program.

Since the first confirmed case of West Nile virus in a dead blue jay located in northwest Houston on June 19, the regional Pesticide Applicator Program has been busy responding to numerous public inquiries regarding the virus and dead-bird collection. Staff from the Pesticide Applicator Program have provided technical assistance to regional mosquito-control programs and attended a press conference the evening of June 21 in northwest Harris County, where aerial pesticide applications were initiated. TDH was also represented at the Texas Mosquito Control Association board meeting in June. *For more information, contact Barbara Key, General Sanitation Program Manager, at (713) 767-3251 or e-mail barbara.key@tdh.state.tx.us.*



New Limits on TB Services.

Funding for tuberculosis activity in the state has remained level for the past eight years, but significant increases in the cost of TB medications and testing supplies over the past several years have caused the Tuberculosis Elimination Program to adjust its funding of local and regional health departments. As a result, TB programs across the state will have to limit the clinic services and other prevention and control activities they offer to the public.

Maintaining TB-control activities is critical to preventing the spread of this airborne disease. The challenge the tuberculosis program faces is how best to maintain a viable TB-control program despite a possible resurgence of TB in Texas. The evidence of this potential resurgence has already been noted. In 2000, the state had the lowest number of TB cases reported in 50 years. In 2001, a 9 percent increase in TB cases was reported. If

this trend continues, the state will once again experience significant increases in TB and the possibility of the emergence of multi-drug-resistant TB. *For more information, contact Charles Wallace, Tuberculosis Elimination Program, at (512) 458-7447, or e-mail charles.wallace@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Chloramphenicol in Shrimp.

The Bureau of Food and Drug Safety is actively engaged in attempts to identify foreign shrimp and crawfish that may be adulterated with chloramphenicol residues.

Chloramphenicol, an antibiotic, is prohibited for use in any food animals, including seafood. Any amount of residue present in a food or food source renders the food adulterated. Current laboratory methodologies used by the European Union, Canada, and Florida can detect residues down to 0.3 parts per billion (ppb). The U.S. Food and Drug Administration is using 1.0 ppb and moving downward to around 0.5 ppb.

TDH has collected and submitted a total of 19 samples to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's (FDA's) Denver laboratory for analysis, from five foreign countries-- China, Vietnam, Brazil, Thailand, and Indonesia. As of July 12, we received one possible result. We have placed the shrimp under state detention and are working within retail stores and with the importer on a recall of all products from the distributor. We are also working with other states and the Texas domestic shrimp industry on this issue.

Shrimp farmers in some other countries are using chloramphenicol to destroy bacteria on the shrimp, in order to allow the shrimp to grow larger. The larger the shrimp, the better the price. Although residues have been found by the FDA and several other states in some shrimp from China, China presumably banned the use of chloramphenicol on any food in March.

Although chloramphenicol has been associated with severe anemia and is thought to be a carcinogen, the levels being found in the shrimp do not appear to pose an immediate health hazard. The FDA has indicated that zero tolerance is used because we do not know of any safe level. At least one nationally known toxicologist has indicated that an individual would need to consume 1,000 pounds of shrimp at a contamination level of 1.0 ppb before any therapeutic dose would be obtained. *For more information, contact Dan Sowards, Manufactured Foods Division, at (512) 719-0243 or e-mail dan.sowards@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Oral Health.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has announced that Texas is one of seven states that will receive a combined total of \$1.4 million annually for the next five years to improve the oral-health status of their population. On July 9 the Division of Oral Health received formal notification from the CDC that it would receive \$149,638 per year for the five-year grant period. The funds will be used to strengthen the program's capacity to monitor trends in oral diseases, improve oral-health prevention education, and evaluate program efforts. Using results from improved monitoring systems will enable the Division of Oral Health to better develop and target oral-health programs to schools and communities with oral-health disparities. *For more information, contact Jerry Felkner, State Dental Director, Division of Oral Health, at (512) 458-7323 or e-mail jerry.felkner@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Survey of Organizational Excellence.

Wanda Thompson and Robin Scott represented TDH on Friday, July 19, at "Forum 2002 - Best Practices in State Government," held on the University of Texas Campus. TDH was invited to demonstrate how the agency promoted and increased participation in

our Survey of Organizational Excellence. Five state agencies were asked to discuss their SOE campaigns before a panel of judges. All the agencies used Powerpoint presentations to outline their campaigns. Our presentation – the fifth and final - was outstanding. The TDH team who worked on the presentation included Wanda Thompson, Robin Scott, Thomas Martinez, and Robin Todd. Both the University of Texas and Southwest Texas have expressed an interest in placing a couple of graduate student interns to work with TDH on implementation and rollout of our improvement plan.

TDH in the News



Media Contacts.

Since the last Commissioner's Report on June 14, 2002, the Office of Communications has received 230 media contacts. About two-thirds have been from Texas newspapers, with the remaining third mostly coming from Texas TV and radio outlets. Highlighted media contacts include those made by *USA Today*, *The New York Times*, the *Boston Globe*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the "Discovery" TV channel, *ABC News*, the *Village Voice*, the *Sacramento Bee*, the *Kansas City Star*, the Associated Press, a national magazine named *Men's Health*, and an online publication called *Horse and Hound*. For more information, contact Doug McBride, Office of Communications, at (512) 458-7524 or e-mail doug.mcbride@tdh.state.tx.us.



Advertising Media Buys.

Diabetes: TV ads on preventing and controlling diabetes will be aired in Corpus Christi and the Rio Grande Valley this August and into September. The campaign will cost a total of \$77,800; \$37,800 from state funds plus a \$40,000 contribution from the Bristol-Myers Squibb Co.

Immunizations: Starting July 29 and continuing for five weeks, TV and radio ads about the importance of immunizations will be aired in both English and Spanish in Corpus Christi, El Paso, Houston, the Valley, and San Antonio. The cost of the spots is still being calculated. The total budget to pay for the media time is \$288,000.

Organ donation: The Diabetes Program has paid \$346,547 for public-service announcements about organ donation. The PSAs are being aired from July 8 to Aug. 11 in Austin and from May 27 to Aug. 4 in Abilene, Sweetwater, Amarillo, Beaumont/Port Arthur, El Paso, Lubbock, the Valley, and Waco/Bryan.

Pertussis: A radio spot about pertussis has been created at the cost of \$11,352. It's being aired from June 17 to July 28 in Austin, Dallas/Fort Worth, El Paso, Houston, the Lower Rio Grande Valley, Midland/Odessa, San Antonio, and Waco. Total budget is \$120,334.

WIC: TV spots about WIC have been running statewide since May 20 and will continue until Aug. 4. The newest one, *Reverse Pregnancy*, promotes contacting WIC early in pregnancy. Three radio spots started airing on July 18 and will also continue until Aug. 4. They're targeted at women in early pregnancy with children younger than 5 in Bexar, Cameron, Dallas, El Paso, Harris, Hidalgo, Tarrant, Travis, and Webb counties. Spanish radio spots are still in production. The ad campaign costs \$700,000: \$461,000 for TV and \$239,000 for radio. For more information, contact Annette Riggio, Office of Communications, at (512) 458-7111, ext. 6394, or e-mail annette.riggio@tdh.state.tx.us.



Tobacco Introduces Casey Smith.

In a creative effort to keep kids from smoking, TDH is sponsoring a 17-year-old Austin race-car driver named Casey Smith. Smith is a three-time national champion who competes in American Speed Association races, watched on TV last year by 9.7 million people. About 18 percent of these viewers are younger than 18, and about 40 percent work in skilled trades or manufacturing. These are the demographic groups we're targeting in a comprehensive program to prevent and halt tobacco use in Houston and other parts of East Texas.

The tobacco industry has spent hundreds of millions of dollars promoting its products through televised and live auto racing. We're taking a slingshot to this Goliath by sending Smith in to represent us. His race car will be emblazoned with "Tobacco is Foul" messages, and he'll lead the "Tobacco is Foul Race Team." In a few weeks, a new TV spot will feature him, and he and his "Tobacco is Foul" race car will make about 10 public appearances in East Texas and Houston. Hundreds of thousands of our targeted audience will see and hear his anti-smoking message.

Sponsoring Smith fits perfectly with the chief criteria for use of the tobacco-settlement funds: effectively reaching a target audience and affecting its behavior. We expect success. Already, after less than one year, TDH's Texas Tobacco Prevention Initiative demonstrated a whopping 40 percent reduction in tobacco use among 6th- and 7th-graders, as well as significant increases in cessation among older youth and adults, in the Port Arthur area where comprehensive media and community programs were in place.

For more information, contact Philip Huang, Bureau of Chronic Disease, at (512) 458-7200 or e-mail philip.huang@tdh.state.tx.us.



News Releases and Health Advisories.

Press releases: So far in July 2002, six press releases have been issued on topics such as pertussis, West Nile Virus, mosquito threats, mold precautions, flood precautions.

Accents on Health: So far in July 2002, feature press releases have been issued on precautions for swimmers, avoiding summer poisonings, and food safety tips for picnics and barbecues. *Radio releases:* So far in July 2002, five radio features have been issued

Disease Outbreaks / Investigations / Recalls



Salmonellosis.

Region 8, with assistance from the Infectious Disease Epidemiology and Surveillance (IDEAS) Division staff, has been investigating an outbreak of salmonellosis among attendees of a graduation reception the first Saturday in June in a coastal city. Of 110 attendees, 92 were reported to be ill, and nine had laboratory-confirmed salmonellosis. Most of the food was prepared by a caterer who simultaneously also prepared food for 300 attendees at a wedding. Most of the food items at the two events were the same. None of the wedding guests became ill. A cake prepared for the graduation by another party was not implicated as the cause of illness. Preliminary analyses indicated no one food item responsible for the illnesses, suggesting possible contamination by someone handling food at the event (a guest server). The food was left out at room temperature for more than six hours, so there was ample time for a pathogen to grow into an infectious

dose. For more information, contact Linda Gaul, Staff Epidemiologist, Infectious Disease Epidemiology and Surveillance Division, at (512) 458-7676 or e-mail linda.gaul@tdh.state.tx.us.



***E. coli* O157:H7.**

A local health department in Region 2/3, with assistance from Central Office, has been investigating an outbreak of *E. coli* O157:H7 in a day-care center. Five cases are culture-confirmed, and there are several other suspected cases. Genetic analyses indicate that the same strain is the cause of all illness in patients who have been cultured to date. The source of the infection within the day-care center has not been identified, but prevention and control measures have been implemented. For more information, contact Linda Gaul, Staff Epidemiologist, Infectious Disease Epidemiology and Surveillance Division, (512) 458-7676 or email Linda.Gaul@tdh.state.tx.us.



Botulism.

A suspected case of botulism in a Louisiana resident who literally “dropped in” at a major Texas airport on his return trip from Salt Lake City has been determined by Central Office staff not to be a case. All patient specimens were negative for botulinum toxin. A noninfectious etiology is suspected as the cause of the patient’s illness. For more information, contact Linda Gaul, Staff Epidemiologist, Infectious Disease Epidemiology and Surveillance Division, at (512) 458-7676 or e-mail linda.gaul@tdh.state.tx.us.



Listeriosis.

Central Office, appropriate regional, and local health department staff have investigated four cases of listeriosis, with onsets ranging from the end of May through the middle of June. Two occurred in New Mexico residents who were hospitalized in Texas. One of these individuals has died. All of the patients except one had significant pre-existing conditions; the fourth had significant exposure to risky foods. None of the patients’ food histories link their exposures to food items recalled for contamination with *Listeria monocytogenes*. And none of their isolated agents match each other or implicated food items on genetic analysis. For more information, contact Linda Gaul, Staff Epidemiologist, Infectious Disease Epidemiology and Surveillance Division, at (512) 458-7676 or e-mail linda.gaul@tdh.state.tx.us.



Shigellosis.

Region 2/3 Epidemiology staff and Central Office IDEAS staff consulted with the Abilene Health Department regarding an outbreak of shigellosis in Abilene. The Abilene Health Department is still working to resolve this outbreak, which has extended over several months and which has involved more than 130 cases. For more information, contact Linda Gaul, Staff Epidemiologist, Infectious Disease Epidemiology and Surveillance Division, (512) 458-7676 or email Linda.Gaul@tdh.state.tx.us.



Gastroenteritis.

A local health department in West Texas, with assistance from Central Office, has been investigating cases of illness that occurred in adolescents attending a “boot camp” experience over a long weekend in mid-June. Of 59 attendees, 37 reported to the local emergency department with symptoms more suggestive of heat exhaustion than gastroenteritis. All patient specimens were negative for enteric pathogens. Questionnaires have been administered to most of the attendees, and the results are being analyzed.

Also, a local health department in Region 2/3, with assistance from Central Office, has also been investigating an outbreak of gastroenteritis among conference attendees in a hotel. This is not the same hotel that had a major outbreak of salmonellosis about two

months ago. Illness onsets were in mid-June. In one cohort of 25 attendees, 13 reported illness. Patient specimens have been negative for common enteric pathogens. The investigation is ongoing. *For more information, contact Linda Gaul, Staff Epidemiologist, Infectious Disease Epidemiology and Surveillance Division, at (512) 458-7676 or e-mail linda.gaul@tdh.state.tx.us.*



The FBI and Radioactive Material.

On July 3, the FBI contacted the Bureau of Radiation Control seeking monitoring assistance while their agents performed a criminal investigation at a residence in the Metroplex. A radioactive material inspector from the Arlington region was dispatched to the residence. During the course of the investigation the inspector found a radioactive source and several contaminated items. They were impounded and are now safely and securely stored at a site in Arlington. Afterward, he surveyed the remainder of the residence and FBI personnel for contamination. None was found. The EPA is the lead federal agency and is responsible for the recovery of the radioactive materials and for any remediation issues at the site. *For more information, contact Robert Free, Bureau of Radiation Control, at (512) 834-6688, ext. 2022, or e-mail robert.free@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Counterfeit prescription drugs.

The Drugs and Medical Devices Division detained \$1.5 million worth of counterfeit prescription drugs in Grapevine (Region 3) during the months of May and June. Our staff, acting on information provided by the Florida Department of Health, worked in concert with the Food and Drug Administration's Office of Criminal Investigations to perform the detentions until federal authorities could seize the drugs. *For more information, contact Cynthia Culmo, Drugs and Medical Devices Division, at (512) 719-0237 or e-mail cynthia.culmo@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Corpus Christi Birth Defects Investigation.

An epidemiologist with the Texas Birth Defects Division together with the geography group in the Associateship Office is continuing the Corpus Christi birth defects investigation. The Birth Defects Monitoring Division is trying to determine whether proximity to sites of concern to Citizens for Environmental Justice is associated with higher risk of one of the six birth defects that are elevated in the area. *For more information, contact Peter Langlois, Texas Birth Defects Monitoring Division, at (512) 458-7232 or e-mail peter.langlois@tdh.state.tx.us.*

New Staff



New Staff.

Ms. Susan Bricker joined the Office of the State Epidemiologist effective July 8, 2002, as the Asthma Epidemiologist. Ms. Bricker will perform specialized epidemiological analysis and surveillance on asthma and will also initiate and conduct epidemiological examinations of asthma in Texas. She is responsible for identifying and examining existing databases for asthma prevalence and incidence data. She will also coordinate and oversee local surveillance programs as required in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Cooperative Agreement. Ms. Bricker comes from the Georgia Department of Human Resources, Division of Public Health. She was their State Cardiovascular Epidemiologist. She has published reports for both scientific and non-scientific audiences and has presented at local and national conferences. Her graduate degree, a master's of public health in the science of epidemiology, comes from Emory

Training/Workshops



Bioterrorism Educational Program.

Significant progress has been made in the development and scheduling of the courses proposed in the education component of the bioterrorism (BT) grant. In addition to establishing the objectives for each course, lists of measurable competencies for each course are also being developed. The first training, Principles of Epidemiology, will be held from July 29 to Aug. 2 in Austin. Participants will be the Epidemiology Response Team (ERT) epidemiologists and nurses. Subsequent courses currently scheduled for the fall include three Basic Epidemiology Workshops (Austin, Arlington, Harlingen), an Epidemiological Software course for ERTs and Central Office Staff, and an Infectious Disease Workshop. Representatives from each of the Schools of Public Health in Texas are slated to meet late in July to develop curricula for BT courses they could provide in the Regions. Those courses would be taught on site, and would help to increase the number of health care professionals with BT training who can readily respond to public health emergencies. For more information, contact Kathleen Shupe-Ricksecker, Staff Epidemiologist, Infectious Disease Epidemiology and Surveillance Division, at (512) 458-7676 or e-mail kathleen.shupe-ricksecker@tdh.state.tx.us.



Promotora Training.

An HIV/STD Health Resources Division staff member attended and assisted with the Promotora Training held in Weslaco. The training was developed in coordination with 14 community-based organizations in the area. The HIV/STD Regional Manager for Region 11 conducted the training in Spanish. The training provided information on gonorrhea, chlamydia, syphilis, herpes, and the human papilloma virus for indigenous persons, who serve as respected leaders within Hispanic communities along the border. For more information, contact Jay Todd, Manager, HIV/STD Training and Public Education Branch, at (512) 490-2535 or e-mail jay.todd@tdh.state.tx.us.



STD Facts and Fallacies Customized Course.

The Prevention Training Center III training manager provided training to staff from the Dallas Independent School District. The training was a customized STD Facts and Fallacies course designed to give participants an increased knowledge of the STD problem, improve communication skills related to STDs, and discuss the relationship between STDs and HIV. The course covered the history, transmission, course of infection, symptomatology, complications, trends, and treatment of syphilis, gonorrhea, chlamydia, herpes, and the human papilloma virus. For more information, contact Jay Todd, Manager, HIV/STD Training and Public Education Branch, at (512) 490-2535 or e-mail jay.todd@tdh.state.tx.us.



Texas Vaccines for Children (TVFC) Program Quality Assurance Training.

On June 4, the TVFC Program conducted quality assurance training. This training was conducted in response to an audit of the program in October 2001, where statewide training was recommended to ensure standardization in quality assurance visits.

There were 28 staff members from all regions in attendance. The agenda included presentations by the Immunization Division's quality assurance partners: the Quality Assurance Division and the Texas Medical Foundation. The focus of the training was to introduce how we work with our partners, quality assurance requirements for our contractors as well as private providers enrolled in the TVFC, and how quality assurance will raise the bar on the standard of care for immunization services that children receive. *For more information, contact Jack Sims, Immunization Division, Texas Vaccines for Children Program, at (512) 458-7284, ext. 6215, or e-mail jack.sims@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Directly Observed Therapy (DOT) Outreach Workshop.

About 70 outreach workers and field staff from various TB programs met June 25-26 in San Antonio at the TB Education Center for a workshop. Topics included an overview of TB, introduction to DOT, patient adherence, the patient interview, working with patients with special challenges, TB medications and their side effects, toxicity monitoring and drug interactions, field safety, infection control, and quality assurance. There were several small-group activities designed to apply and practice the concepts learned in the presentations. The next workshop will be held in September in Harlingen. *For more information, contact Paula Watrous, TB Elimination Division, at (512) 458-7447 or e-mail paula.watrous@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Medicaid 1115 Waiver.

The HIV/STD Clinical Resources Division (CRD) continues to participate on the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) Workgroup to develop the proposed Medicaid 1115 waiver for persons with HIV disease in Bexar, Dallas, Harris, and Travis counties and those treated at the University of Texas Medical Branch-Galveston. CRD provides technical assistance on benefit package development and other aspects related to clinical and social issues and has been assigned to write the portion of the waiver related to client benefits. CRD, with input from the Bureau of HIV and STD Prevention, will submit the names of suggested external stakeholders to HHSC for a possible community stakeholder meeting or meetings related to the waiver. *For more information, contact Linda Moore, Director, HIV/STD Clinical Resources Division, at (512) 490-2505 or e-mail linda.moore@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Health and Human Services Administrative System (HHSAS) Training.

Eight trainers have been assigned to the HHSAS project full-time. These individuals are a combination of TDH trainers reassigned from the TDH Training Office and employees from various program areas who volunteered to assist with HHSAS training. Those individuals are Lionell Smith, Steven Fearing, Kristine Mohajer, Alan Heinzke, Patti Bruce, Michelle Pittman, Kathryn Johnson, and Marilyn Kelso. *For more information, contact Mary Castleberry at (512) 458-7503 or e-mail mary.castleberry@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Grants



Bioterrorism Hospital Preparedness Grant Update.

A meeting of the Hospital Preparedness Planning committee took place on June 20. A Deputy Commissioner welcomed 25 committee members and concluded his remarks with a charge. A representative of the General Physics Corporation then discussed the results of the Comprehensive Survey and the trends that were identified. The committee proceeded with reviewing the results of the needs-assessment analysis in subgroups. The subgroups determined trends, short-term recommendations, long-term recommendations, and driving forces for the section they were reviewing. The Hospital Preparedness

Planning committee's remarks were taken under advisement and incorporated into the Phase II report sent to the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA).

As required in Phase I of the HRSA Hospital Preparedness Grant, Phase II was submitted on July 1. TDH is currently waiting for approval from HRSA to move forward on hospital preparedness and response-implementation activities, utilizing the approximately \$7.9 million that has been earmarked by HRSA for Texas. *For more information, contact Lisa Schultz, Office of State Epidemiologist, at (512) 458-7219 or e-mail lisa.Schultz@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Early Access Grants RFP.

The HIV/STD Clinical Resources Division completed competition for the state-funded “Early Access to Clinical and Preventive Services for Persons with HIV Disease” grant statewide. The grant will provide funds to deliver ambulatory medical care and/or clinical case management and/or psychosocial case-management services to people with HIV disease who reside in, generally, non-urban counties not currently funded with Ryan White Title I funds. Twelve grant applications were received; one application was dismissed due to lack of submission of required forms/documents. Based on external review, eight agencies were selected to receive funding. Two of the agencies will be required to undergo a predetermination site visit prior to awarding of the funds to ensure their capacity to perform on the grant. *For more information, contact Linda Moore, Division Director, at (512) 490-2505 or e-mail linda.moore@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Border Health Institute.

The Border Health Institute was awarded community-grant funding in the amount of \$335,600 by the El Paso Empowerment Zone. The funds will be used to hire a project director, provide administrative support and accounting services for the BHI, develop a ten-year strategic plan, and prepare a master plan for the BHI campus. *For more information, contact Gale Morrow, Deputy Regional Director, at (915) 834-7675 or e-mail gale.morrow@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Program Updates



Hepatitis C Virus (HCV).

The hepatitis C staff recently received a copy of the “Viral Hepatitis and HIV/AIDS Integration: A Resource Guide for HIV/AIDS programs,” a national guide for integration projects published by the National Association of State and Territorial AIDS Directors. The staff had previously worked with the National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS Directors (NASTAD) on writing two sections that feature TDH: the sections on the Hepatitis C State Workgroup and the creation of the TDH white paper, “Hepatitis C: An Emerging Health Concern for Texans.”

The hepatitis C staff submitted an abstract for the 9th Minority Health Conference Healthy Texans 2010 in Irving on Nov. 7-9. Staff received notification in July that the abstract was chosen for one of the sessions.

A staff epidemiologist presented a continuing-medical-education (CME) lecture on hepatitis C at the TDH Quarterly CME conference on June 14. *For more information, contact Gary Heseltine, Staff Epidemiologist, Infectious Disease Epidemiology and Surveillance Division, at (512) 458-7676 or e-mail gary.heseltine@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Ten Against TB (TATB) Steering Council Meeting.

On June 3, the Steering Council of TATB met in Chihuahua, Mexico. The members of the Executive Committee reviewed and revised the evaluation criteria for selection of a permanent secretariat. The Steering Council adopted the revised criteria and extended the deadline for submission of proposals to Aug. 5. They approved a proposal that TATB seek to serve as the technical advisory group on tuberculosis for the U.S.-Mexico Border Health Commission. Also, a work group was delegated the task of developing a document that assesses funding needs, identifies potential funding resources and mechanisms, and describes funding barriers. It was decided that the non-governmental organization (NGO) members of the Steering Council will draft a statement to be presented at a later meeting of their vision of the role that NGOs can play in the leadership and work of TATB. *For more information, contact Jose Moreira, TB Elimination Division, at (512) 458-7447 or e-mail jose.moreira@tdh.state.tx.us.*



TB Epi Studies Consortium.

Members of the Texas TB Epi Studies Consortium met June 27-28 to discuss potential TB research topics. They selected three areas for research to be submitted for discussion by the national TB Epi Studies Consortium in August. These three areas will be the research priorities for the Consortium: TB in foreign-born populations, TB contact investigations, and targeted testing and treatment of latent TB infection. *For more information, contact Jeff Taylor, TB Elimination Division, at (512) 458-7447 or e-mail jeff.taylor@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Texas TB Coalition.

On July 26, members of the Texas TB Coalition will meet in Austin at the offices of the American Lung Association of Texas to discuss strategies to raise the awareness of TB prevention and control. *For more information, contact Ann Tyree, TB Elimination Division, at (512) 458-7447 or e-mail ann.tyree@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Immunization Conference 2002.

The registration packet for the Immunize Texasize 2002 Immunization Conference was sent to more than 14,000 persons including local health departments, regional offices, private providers, school nurses, nurse practitioners, public health educators, and members of the general public. The conference will be held Nov. 18-21 at the Hyatt Regency Austin on Town Lake. There will be four plenary sessions and more than 30 breakout sessions with nationally known speakers such as Dr. Bill Atkinson, immunization expert from CDC; Dr. Neil Shulman, also known as “Doc Hollywood”; Dr. Paul Offit from the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia; and Brian O’Malley, a world-known inspirational speaker. The packet is also available through the immunization web site at www.ImmunizeTexas.com. *For more information, contact Lupe Mandujano Garcia, Communication and Training Program, Immunization Division, at (512) 458- 7284, or e-mail LupeM.Garcia@tdh.state.tx.us*



Fiscal and Administrative Improvement Response (FAIR) Teams.

Teams have been assigned to address business-process improvements identified in the Business Evaluation Report. Teams were formed to address the following functions: budget, accounting, purchasing and contracting, grants management, human resources, and information resources. The teams have recently provided draft reports to the executive sponsors of best practices for these functions and are now documenting TDH current practices. Subsequently, the teams will identify implementation plans for aligning

TDH practices with best practices and identifying cost savings. Due to the broadness of TDH's funding sources, a separate team has now been formed to address revenue management. *For more information, contact Machel Pharr at (512) 458-7640 or e-mail machelle.pharr@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Common Birth Defect.

Hearing loss is the most common birth defect (one in 300) in the United States, yet a recent report states that there has been a nationwide slowdown in the trend toward universal newborn hearing screening. Despite an unsatisfactory performance by other states with comparable birth populations (California – 34.5 percent; New York – 16 percent), Texas continues to earn the highest marks for its prevention efforts. Not only is Texas one of only 14 states that received a rating of “excellent,” but also, among the top 14 states, Texas is number one in terms of percentage screened per total population.

Newborn hearing screening data is now being transmitted electronically for 98.3 percent of newborns in mandated birth facilities in Texas – representing approximately 322,518 newborns per year. This is a wonderful accomplishment for the children and families of Texas, and a landmark achievement in public health and preventive medicine. *For more information, contact John Walker, at (512) 458-7111, x.3829, or e-mail john.walker@tdh.state.tx.us or Joy O’Neal, at (512) 458-7726, or e-mail joy.oneal@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Application for a Cooperative Agreement.

On June 4, the Texas Birth Defects Research Center (TBDRC) submitted an application for a Cooperative Agreement with the CDC Centers for Birth Defects Research and Prevention. If awarded, this grant will allow for the continuation of TBDRC activities such as the enhancement of the Texas birth-defects surveillance systems; further development and expansion of Texas’ epidemiological research capability; continued participation in the National Birth Defects Prevention Study; and the use, implementation, and evaluation of the surveillance data for local and collaborative studies into birth-defects research, including environmental exposures, gene-gene interactions, and gene-environment interactions. Awards of this Cooperative Agreement will be announced later this summer. *For more information, contact Dawna Wright, Texas Birth Defects Research Center, at (512) 458-7232 or e-mail dawna.wright@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Town Hall Meeting on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome/Fetal Alcohol Effects (FAS/E).

An epidemiologist with the Texas Birth Defects Monitoring Division presented testimony at the Town Hall Meeting on FAS/E, held at the Capitol in Austin on June 21. The Texas meeting was one of only six such meetings planned across the United States. The meetings are being sponsored by the FAS Center for Excellence, which was established by federal law and is administered through the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP) of the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). The purpose of the regional Town Hall Meetings is to gather information from individuals and families affected by FAS/E, as well as professionals, on personal experiences and the issues relevant to their lives and work, especially gaps in services for persons with FAS/E and their families. Testimony will be summarized in a report to Congress due Oct. 1, which will outline a national strategy on FAS/E prevention, screening, diagnosis, and treatment.

The panel receiving testimony in Texas included representatives of the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention, the FAS Center for Excellence, the National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities of the CDC, the FAS Family Resource Institute, the Texas Interagency Council on Early Childhood Intervention (ECI), the

Texas Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse, the Texas Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation, and the Texas Education Agency. *For more information, contact Mary Ethen, Texas Birth Defects Monitoring Division, at (512) 458-7232 or e-mail mary.ethen@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Satellite Videoconferences.

The Public Education Coordinator of the HIV/STD Health Resources Division facilitated and evaluated the satellite video downlink, “Effective Behavioral Intervention for HIV Prevention,” presenting four innovative programs to deliver HIV-prevention messages. A tape of the event is available by contacting the Public Education Coordinator. *For more information, contact Jay Todd, Manager, HIV/STD Training and Public Education Branch, at (512) 490-2535 or e-mail jay.todd@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Health Fair.

HIV/STD Health Resources Division staff provided educational materials at the Austin State Hospital for a health fair. *For more information, contact Jay Todd, Manager, HIV/STD Training and Public Education Branch, at (512) 490-2535 or e-mail jay.todd@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Behavioral Data Project.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention project staff met in Austin with TDH staff from the Bureau of HIV and STD Prevention along with Massachusetts project staff for the quarterly progress meeting. As the project nears the third year of completion and moves toward dissemination in the fourth and last year, the group discussed methods and possible funding sources to sustain the project’s purpose, which is to improve the use of behavioral data in decision-making processes for HIV prevention. *For more information, contact Shirley Broussard, Manager, HIV/STD Planning Branch, at (512) 490-2525 or e-mail shirley.broussard@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Bulk Purchasing of HIV Medications.

The Texas HIV Medication Program will move the bulk purchasing of HIV and STD drugs to the TDH Pharmacy. The plan is to begin the process as a pilot program in one region beginning in the fall of 2002. The contract with the current company, Cardinal Health, which performs bulk purchasing for all HIV medications, will be renewed for one additional year while the pilot is under way. If the pilot is successful, the plan is to extend bulk purchasing of all medications by the TDH Pharmacy by 2003. *For more information, contact Linda Moore, Director, HIV/STD Clinical Resources Division, at (512) 490-2505 or e-mail linda.moore@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Third-Party Distribution.

The third-party vaccine distribution contract for the direct shipping of vaccine to each of the Texas Vaccines For Children provider sites has been awarded to General Injectables Vaccines (GIV). The first two regions have submitted vaccine orders to the Central Office, and these will be submitted to GIV for shipping by July 8. All providers will be receiving 99 percent of their vaccines/toxoids/biologicals from GIV by the end of September 2002. The remaining one percent will continue to be shipped from the Pharmacy Division on an as-needed basis. *For more information, contact Judi Chase, Immunization Division, Vaccine Management Program, at (512) 458-7284, ext. 6266, or e-mail judi.chase@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Cardiovascular Disease and Stroke Summit 2002.

The “Cardiovascular Disease and Stroke Summit 2002: A Case for Building Public/Private Partnerships” was held June 19-21 in San Antonio. More than 120

participants heard presentations on the development of local partnerships to promote primary and secondary prevention of cardiovascular disease. Eight awardees for the 2002 Texas Cardiovascular Health Promotion Awards were recognized at the Summit. *For more information, contact Jennifer Smith, Cardiovascular Health and Wellness Program, at (512) 458-7670 or e-mail jennifer.smith@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Rates of Pneumococcal Vaccinations.

The Adult Health Program, in collaboration with the Texas Department of Aging (TDOA) and the TDH Immunization program, will be conducting a pilot project in El Paso to increase the rates of pneumococcal vaccinations received by individuals 65 and older. *For more information, contact Anne Williamson, Adult Health Program, at (512) 458-7534 or e-mail anne.williamson@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Proficiency Test Results.

Proficiency test results were evaluated by outside agencies as 100 percent correct on specimens submitted to the Newborn Screening Branch, including 15 phenylalanine levels, 15 galactose levels, five T4 levels, five TSH levels, five 17-OHP levels, and 10 hemoglobinopathy results. *For more information, contact Susan Neill, Bureau of Laboratories, at (512) 458-7318 or e-mail susan.neill@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Newborn Screening Tests.

In May 2002, the Newborn Screening Branch analyzed more than 296,140 tests on about 59,228 newborn-screening specimens to provide results for the battery of five different disorders. *For more information, contact Susan Neill, Bureau of Laboratories, at (512) 458-7318 or e-mail susan.neill@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Medical Technology Students.

Two Southwest Texas State University (SWT) medical technology students rotated through the Special Chemistry Section, and one Austin State Hospital student and one SWT student rotated through the Hemoglobinopathy Testing Section of the Clinical Chemistry Branch. *For more information, contact Susan Neill, Bureau of Laboratories, at (512) 458-7318 or e-mail susan.neill@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Texas Health Steps and Title V Tests.

The Clinical Chemistry Branch performed 58,650 tests on 26,884 Texas Health Steps and Title V specimens. *For more information, contact Susan Neill, Bureau of Laboratories, at (512) 458-7318 or e-mail susan.neill@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Hospital Licensing Seminars.

The Board of Health passed new amendments to the Nursing Services section of the Hospital Licensing Rules, regarding nurse staffing, in March with an effective date of Sept. 1. The Hospital Licensing Section, along with the Texas Hospital Association and the Texas Nurses Association, have held five seminars to assist stakeholders in understanding the new rules and to provide guidance for their implementation in hospitals. So far, more than 600 people have attended the five seminars that have been held at different locations throughout the state. *For more information, contact John Evans, Hospital Licensing Director, at (512) 834-6648 or e-mail johnm.evans@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Food Safety and Security Symposium.

The Texas Food Safety Task Force, which is composed of 16 members from TDH, regulated industry, Consumer's Union, academia, and our federal counterparts, is hosting

a 1.5-day “Food Safety and Security Symposium” in Arlington, Sept. 11-12, at the Arlington Hilton. The Symposium is co-sponsored by the Mid-Continental Association of Food and Drug Officials and partially funded by a small conference grant from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Food Safety and Inspection Service may also be assisting with the funding in the form of a Cooperative Agreement.

Among the speakers is U.S. Undersecretary for Food Safety, Dr. Elsa Murano. Dr. Murano is a former professor at Texas A&M University and former member of the Task Force. Speakers also include Dr. Dennis Perrotta, TDH State Epidemiologist; Dr. Suzanne Barth from the TDH Bureau of Laboratories; Dr. Rhona Applebaum, Vice President of the National Food Processors Association in Washington, D.C.; Mr. George Hughes, Deputy Director of FDA’s Office of Criminal Investigations from Washington; and many other prominent individuals.

Topics include food security following Sept. 11; investigations of tampering incidents; chain of command for counter-terrorism and tampering incidents; and the use of new technologies for food safety, including high pressure pasteurization, pulsed-field gel electrophoresis, and non-ionizing radiation (food irradiation using e-beam technology).

Registration for the Symposium is \$50 for government officials and \$150 for industry, academia, and consumers. *For more information on the Symposium, including registration, contact Dan Sowards, Director of Manufactured Foods Division, at (512) 719-0243 or e-mail dan.sowards@tdh.state.tx.us; or Steve McAndrew, Director of Retail Foods Division, at (512) 719-0232 or e-mail steve.mcandrew@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Licensing Warehouses in Texas.

Bureau of Food and Drug Safety staff met with legislative staff from the offices of Senators Duncan and West, along with staff from the Legislative Council, to discuss legislation to give the department authority to license food warehouses in Texas. *For more information, contact Derek Jakovich, Licensing and Enforcement Division, at (512) 719-0222 or e-mail derek.jakovich@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Certificates.

For the month of June, the Bureau of Food and Drug Safety issued 300 Certificates of Free Sale and Sanitation and/or Certificates of Origin to food and drug establishments wishing to sell their products outside the United States. Total fees collected for this service were \$1,550. *For more information, contact Derek Jakovich, Licensing and Enforcement Division, at (512) 719-0222 or e-mail derek.jakovich@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Breast and Cervical Cancer and Osteoporosis.

The Breast and Cervical Cancer Control Program, the Osteoporosis Program, and the Office of Minority Health are working with the Asian American community in the Houston area to conduct a conference in late FY2002 to focus attention on the problems of breast and cervical cancer and osteoporosis among Asian and Pacific Islander women in Texas. The conference, “Asian Pacific Islander Women’s Health - Cultural Tools Beyond Communication,” will bring together diverse providers to review data on the impact of these conditions in this population and to provide tools for providers to use to encourage Asian and Pacific Islander women to seek screening for early detection and treatment. Asian-American women have among the highest incidence rates of cervical cancer and osteoporosis in the United States, including Texas. *For more information, contact*



The Perinatal Program.

The Perinatal program and the Spatial Approaches to Health Outcomes Program has been working to use GIS software to develop detailed resource information for each public health region to highlight geographic access to multiple perinatal resources. By the end of the summer, Perinatal Program staff will complete visits to each region to assess these resource maps and to consult regarding key perinatal outcomes for each region.

Legislation was passed during the 75th Legislative session that required TDH to provide support to each region to develop perinatal-resource planning groups and annual plans to address perinatal issues in each planning area. The perinatal planning areas identified in the legislation are generally similar to the public health regions. *For more information, contact Margaret Mendez, Chief, Bureau of Women's Health, at (512) 458-7111, ext. 2254, or e-mail margaret.mendez@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Homeland Security Operations Group.

The Homeland Security Operations group is sponsored by the Director of the Criminal Justice Division in the Office of the Governor, and is part of the governor's Taskforce on Homeland Security. The focus of the group will be to identify the state's emergency-alert systems for the purpose of ensuring the following: 1) State Agency Alert systems cross-communicate, 2) All state populations are served, and 3) Redundant efforts are reduced or eliminated. The group will meet every Wednesday at 4 p.m. at the Capitol. The following state agencies are members of this group: TDH, the Texas Department of Public Safety; the Texas Department of Human Services, the Texas Education Agency, the Texas Department of Transportation, the Texas Department of Information Resources, and the Texas Natural Resources Conservation Commission. Two members of the Bureau of IS Operations are members of the Homeland Security Operations group. In addition, they will represent the Health Alert Network. TDH will expand network services to 81 TDH sites statewide between July and October; these sites will become part of the Health Alert Network. *For more information, contact Jeff Peden, (512) 458-7111, ext. 6356, or e-mail jeff.peden@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Regional Updates

Public Health Region 1



Hantavirus information meeting held.

Due to a recent case of hantavirus pulmonary syndrome (HPS) in Crosby County, interest in the disease was at a high, so, at the request of the family of the hantavirus victim, regional Zoonosis staff members held a community meeting to discuss the disease, its prevention, and its treatment, and to dispel any rumors. A number of interested citizens and public officials from around Crosby County attended the meeting, which was held on June 25 in Ralls. *For more information, contact Dr. James Alexander, Regional Zoonosis veterinarian, at (806) 655-7151 or e-mail james.alexander@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Tularemia found in northeastern portion of region.

Testing on a rabbit in the area of Gene Howe Wildlife Refuge, northeast of Canadian, Texas, has indicated the presence of tularemia, or rabbit fever. In the past three months, more than 20 dead rodents have been found in the area. Employees, visitors, and neighbors of the wildlife refuge have been informed about how to halt the spread of the disease. While the disease is not common in humans, regional Zoonosis staff members are monitoring the area. *For more information, contact Dr. James Alexander, Regional Zoonosis veterinarian, at (806) 655-7151 or e-mail james.alexander@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Training center.

Regional community health staff members were on hand for the opening of the Area Health Education Center (AHEC) in Plainview on June 13. The AHEC, which is operated by the Texas Tech Health Sciences Center's Office of Rural Health, is a training center for health workers of all disciplines and welcomes students interested in working in rural public health and in all health-related fields. TDH's regional community health team will be coordinating with AHEC on some public health educational programs and seminars. *For more information, contact Lawrence Headley, Regional Nutritionist, at (806) 767-0463 or e-mail lawrence.headley@tdh.state.tx.us*

Public Health Region 2/3



Rabies.

Region 2/3 is still leading the state with the number of rabies-infected animals, mainly rabies-infected skunks. The region currently has 252 cases of rabies-infected animals. In 2001 there were 318 cases of rabies-infected animals. The rabies-infected skunks have shifted to the east and southeast of Region 2/3. This is evident with Region 7 and Region 4 having an increase in their cases of skunk rabies. *For more information, contact Connie Lindley, Zoonosis Control Program Manager, at (817) 264-4921 or e-mail connie.lindley@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Disaster Preparedness for Animal Controls and Animal Shelters.

The Zoonosis Control Veterinarian delivered a presentation on Disaster and Bio T Preparedness for Animal Controls and Animal Shelters at the Humane Society of the United States Conference in Fort Worth, and a presentation for the Feral Cat Conference, in June, in Richland Hills. A Zoonotic Diseases Animal Control Officer Trainer course, Basic Animal Control Officer training course, and an Animal Control Laws course were given by Zoonosis Control Region 2/3. *For more information contact, Connie Lindley, Zoonosis Control Program Manager, at (817) 264-4921 or e-mail connie.lindley@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Bioterrorism Response Team.

Region 2/3 Bioterrorism Response Team participated in the Dallas/Fort Worth Airport Bioterrorism Preparedness/Weapons of Mass Destruction training exercise. Regional staff are incorporating the experience and information obtained during this exercise into the development of regional bioterrorism response plans. *For more information, contact Bryan Flow, Emergency Response Program Manager, at (817) 264-4553 or e-mail bryan.flow@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Anderson County Future Search Reunion.

Members of the Anderson County community gathered for a reunion of the 2001 Anderson County Future Search Conference. Thirty-six participants attended the reunion to revisit issues from last year's Future Search where community stakeholders planned strategies and formed action teams to improve the health of people in Anderson County. The reunion was an opportunity to share and celebrate successes that the action teams accomplished during the past year. In addition, the reunion provided an opportunity to discuss issues that had not been addressed by teams and a chance to identify areas where improvement is still needed. Fourteen teams were formed and/or reorganized. The participants at the Future Search Reunion decided that they would again like to meet in one year to acknowledge accomplishments, monitor progress, and evaluate "how to improve the health of people in Anderson County." *For more information, contact Paula Hughes at (903) 533-5386 or e-mail paula.hughes@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Zoonosis Control Program's Animal Control Officer Continuing Education Class.

On June 26, the Zoonosis Control Program staff hosted an Animal Control Officer continuing education seminar at the Tyler Junior College Training Complex. The featured speaker was Roger Messick of Schertz, who presented a three-hour segment on bees. The inclusion of bees on the program was a result of an inquiry from the Anderson County judge. Other agenda items included "Pseudorabies in Hogs and Tuberculosis in Cattle" by Joe Kelsey of the Texas Animal Health Commission, as well as updates on the West Nile virus and bats by Alice Davis, TDH Zoonosis Control Specialist. *For more information, contact Dr. James Wright at (903) 533-5243 or e-mail james.wright@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Marion County Diabetes Coalition.

On June 3, the Marion County Extension Service hosted a meeting of the Marion County Diabetes Coalition. The featured speaker for the meeting was Heidi Turpin of the Texas Medical Foundation (TMF) who presented information about TMF, emphasizing its special interest in diabetes activities. Information was shared on methods to heighten diabetes awareness in Marion County, to establish programs within the community that would have a positive effect in the near future to assist diabetics and family members, and to identify resources available outside the community. There were about 25 participants, including community leaders, interested citizens, and regional staff. *For more information, contact Glen Hawkins at (903) 232-3225 or e-mail glen.hawkins@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Public Health Region 6 and 5 South



Epidemiology Response Team (ERT).

The regional ERT has identified the locations for two satellite surveillance offices in the region. The satellite offices, to be located in Bellville (Austin County) and Cleveland (Liberty County), will each be staffed by a nurse and public health technician. When fully operational these sites will enhance infectious-disease reporting and investigation, improve response for outbreak investigations, and serve as a local resource for education and training in Austin, Colorado, Liberty, Matagorda, Waller, Walker, and Wharton counties. *For more information, contact Luis Gonzalez, Epidemiology Response Team Leader, at (713) 767-3343 or e-mail luis.gonzalez@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Public Health Region 7



Incident Command System (ICS).

Region 7 staff had an opportunity to use the Incident Command System (ICS) to conduct special immunization clinics in Burnet County on July 9 and 11 as an exercise for the regional emergency-preparedness plan. The ICS is a universal management system used by emergency-management agencies. The project involved individuals from the Burnet and Marble Falls Emergency Medical Services (EMS) units, Health and Human Services Children Health Insurance Program, Region 7 Immunization, EMS, Tuberculosis, Epidemiology, Birth Defects, and Public Health Nursing programs. These individuals operated in a multi-functional capacity and had stated objectives to accomplish. *For more information, contact Maribeth Bartz at (254) 778-6744, ext. 2440, or e-mail maribeth.bartz@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Rabies.

On June 13, the Zoonosis Control veterinarian presented information on trends in animal rabies and on the animal-rabies-vaccination legal-review process to veterinarians at a monthly Highland Lakes Veterinary Medical Association meeting held in Marble Falls (Burnet County). As a result of the meeting, some veterinarians from this association have joined an e-mail distribution list to receive public health information impacting Region 7.

On June 14, the Zoonosis Control veterinarian presented a rabies lecture to faculty, staff, and four-year veterinary students at the College of Veterinary Medicine (CVM) in College Station (Brazos County). Texas A&M University (TAMU)-CVM representatives requested the lecture after rabid animals were handled through their large and small animal clinics. Attendees benefited from a review of rabies transmission, current animal rabies trends in Texas, and rabies postexposure-vaccination protocols. As a result of the lecture, the Zoonosis Control veterinarian was asked to make her lecture an annual event for each new class of students, interns, and residents and to review a “standard operating procedure” under development by TAMU-CVM personnel for reporting and processing potential rabies exposures experienced by faculty, staff, students, and clients. *For more information, contact Beverlee E. Nix at (254) 778-6744, ext. 2450, or e-mail beverlee.nix@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Public Health Region 8



Partnerships for Tuberculosis Treatment and Prevention.

Local Health Department staff, physicians, and nurses from both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border were present on July 11 when Region 8 and the TB Education Center hosted a Building Partnerships for Tuberculosis Treatment and Prevention conference in Del Rio. Topics of discussion included the epidemiology of TB in Texas, essentials of good contact investigation, treatment of latent TB infection, and coordinating the care of patients with TB. *For more information, contact Sandra Morris, Tuberculosis Control Division, at (210) 949-2196 or e-mail sandra.morris@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Public Health Region 9/10



Texas Health Steps Outreach and Informing Workgroup.

The deputy regional director is participating on the Texas Health Steps workgroup to consider cost-saving strategies for the program. The Health and Human Services Commission has asked the program to consider amending the contract with Maximus to include conducting outreach and information activities for Regions 4/5N, 9/10, and 11.

For more information, contact Gale Morrow, Deputy Regional Director, at (915) 834-7675 or e-mail gale.morrow@tdh.state.tx.us.



Permian Basin Council of Government (PBCOG).

The Emergency Response Coordinator for Region 9/10 and the Deputy Regional Director met with the PBCOG to discuss the Region's plans for public health preparedness and bioterrorism response.

For more information, contact Terri Escobar, Emergency Response Coordinator, at (915) 834-7683 or e-mail terri.escobar@tdh.state.tx.us.

Public Health Region 11



South Texas Family Support.

On June 7, the Region 11 Regional Director presented a lecture with clinical anecdotes on the 14 mental health objectives of *Healthy People 2010* at the South Texas Family Support conference. It was well received, with many questions from the audience. This was the seventh year for this annual conference with several hundred attendees, many of whom are family members and patients with Mental Health and Mental Retardation (MHMR) conditions as well as professionals of community MHMR contractors.

Audience questions involved the need for increased funding for general adolescent services. A partnership with other state agencies for mental health in the next legislative session was suggested. *For more information, contact Dr. Brian Smith, Regional Director, at (956) 423-0130 or e-mail brian.smith@tdh.state.tx.us.*



South Texas Association of County Judges and Commissioners.

On June 20, the Regional Director presented the public health priorities of TDH to the South Texas Association of County Judges and Commissioners. He gave practical suggestions to the audience of commissioners and judges on their partnership with public health on improving immunization rates and levels of community fitness. Some questions centered on forming local health departments. *For more information, contact Dr. Brian Smith, Regional Director, at (956) 423-0130 or e-mail brian.smith@tdh.state.tx.us.*